The UK, Great Britain, Britain and England are often randomly used to refer to the same geographical area. Yet, these terms carry vitally different denotations and meanings; not to mention connotations and feelings. A Scot or a Welshman would be offended if you referred to him/her as English. The terms do not only denote specific geographical areas, but each represents a different blend of national cultural identities and values.

*denotation, connotation, entity, misleading, annex, partition, current, oppose, conjunction, significant, awareness, superimpose, aspiration, bond, commerce, furthermore, fortify, code of conduct, strike a chord, falter, scepticism, focal point*

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**The United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is the official name of the geographical entity we normally call Britain. The Union came about in four stages, and it consists of four nations: Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. The term Britain is often misleadingly replaced with England. The UK refers to the whole Union, while Great Britain only refers to the British mainland, excluding Northern Ireland. *The Union Jack.*

In 1707, the two countries Scotland and England were politically united. Already in the 1530s, Wales had been annexed by England and Ireland was taken into the Union in 1801. When Ireland was partitioned in 1921, Northern Ireland remained part of the Union while the south gained its independence. This historical development accounts for the current official name of the Union and it underlines that the four nations all have their separate histories with their own values and identities. Thus, when examining British national identity, it is necessary to locate issues, features or events that have bound the four nations together. In other words, factors which have contributed to building up and strengthening the bond between Britons in the four nations as opposed to or in conjunction with the individual national identities.

**Britishness and the Union**

Interestingly, there are many important issues, both social and political, relating to the Union as a whole. It is worth noting that the formation of the British identity was, in the Union’s early phase, just as significant as the creation of the political unit. Historical events have therefore contributed directly to an awareness around the idea of Britishness and what the term in itself came to convey. Furthermore, modern factors like decolonialisation, post war immigration, joining Europe and the close relationship to America have affected what it means to be British. Thus, Britishness has developed and changed over time.

A common notion among several historians is that Britishness was something that was superimposed as a national identity in the early phase of the Union. Already a century before the political union when King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England and Scotland in 1603, he began a project of trying to unify the Scots and the English, attempting to create a union of “hearts and minds”. He made flags and coins in his aspiration to have the two nations bond. But King James’ Britishness project failed. Identity was something the population of the two nations had to feel passionately for and not be told to feel for. Nevertheless, there were a few unifying forces that could be labelled truly British as the centuries wore on and Britain began to make a mark in the world.

**Forces Determining National Identity**

Values and identity are often connected to large, often abstract issues that can contribute to create certain sentiments in a population. For Britons, history and the country’s former greatness certainly form the basis of contemporary British national identity.

Protestantism was apparently the strongest point of identification for Britons since they saw themselves as being different from their continental Catholic neighbours, first and foremost France. And this means Protestantism in a wide sense, not only in a religious context, but equally much the ways in which Protestantism shaped British people’s lives and values. At the same time, it helped Britons to identify their enemies, suggesting that Britain could measure itself against a Catholic axis, from Ireland to Spain, France and Italy. Standing together against this ‘outer enemy’ strengthened Britain’s national identity. There is no doubt that this inner strength helped Britain survive and triumph in two world wars, even though the enemy in the wars was never Catholic. It was at the centre of the worldwide trade of the British Empire. Trade and commerce was regarded as a typical British activity and the ways in which profits were invested gave Britain a commercial image that very much became part of British society. A liberal attitude towards market forces and direct encouragement of entrepreneurship led toa ‘monied’ interest that drove Britain towards industrialisation.

*London Custom House*

Furthermore, trade, profits and a general increase in wealth resulted in a new infrastructure that tied the nations of Britain closer together, increasing the feeling of a British togetherness at the expense of national interests.

By the time of “The Great Exhibition” in 1851, which in itself was a landmark of British pride and identity, Britons directed much of their Britishness into the evolving Empire. The extended use of symbols, flags and other emblems around the world fortified the British identity and towards the end of the 19th century, the British people considered it important to bring their values out into the world. British relative greatness and their own assumptions about themselves indeed strengthened the feeling of what it meant to be British and their code of conduct was something they felt should be copied by others.

**Britishness into the 20th Century**

But as we move into the 20th century, it is reasonable to argue that Britishness changed, especially after World War II. The two world wars held the Union together and enforced the bonds between its inhabitants. In World War II, Prime Minister Winston Churchill used political rhetoric and symbolic power of language that struck a chord with the British population. In one of his famous speeches he pays tribute to the men of the Royal Air Force (RAF) who were currently fighting the Germans in the Battle of Britain: "Never was so much owed by so many to so few."

In the mid-war years, however, the prime symbol of Britishness, the Empire, had begun to falter. Hence, national identity changed after 1945 and two of the most important reasons may be seen as two sides of the same issue: the dissolution of the Empire and the beginning of mass immigration. Immigration changed the face of British society and white Britons had to accept new interpretations of Britishness, not always without difficulty. This is demonstrated in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, a novel and BBC adaption. In the story we meet Gilbert, a Jamican immigrant, who rushes to the rescue of what he terms his "mother country" during the Battle of Britain by signing up for - to freely quote Churchill - "the few who helped so many", the RAF. His efforts are not met with the gratitude that one might expect.  *British passport*

Patriotic feelings binding Britons together got a new boost, though, in 1982, when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declared war against Argentina over the supremacy of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. The war lasted for two months and was considered a great victory for Britain, which regained control of the islands. Thirty years after the war, though, the controversy between the two countries seems to have reached a new height. The prospect of oil reserves in the ocean surrounding the islands has stirred patriotic sentiments once again. Read more The Falkland Islands Dispute.

The physical location of Britain – as a nation of islanders – has had and still has an impact on their relations to other countries and thus their feeling of Britishness. One thing is their “cousin”, the United States of America, but their neighbours on the continent are another matter. Even if Britain joined the European Union (EU) as early as in 1973, “Euroscepticism” towards their continental family is quite prevalent. In their

*Royal Wedding* relations with the EU, Britian is often considered

as “the reluctant bride”, with their fierce resistance to join the monetary union as the predominant example. Britishness is the state or quality of being British, or of embodying British characteristics, and is used to refer to that which binds and distinguishes the British people and forms the basis of their unity and identity, or else to explain expressions of British culture — such as habits, behaviours or symbols — that have a common, familiar or iconic quality readily identifiable with the United Kingdom.

Dialogue about the legitimacy and authenticity of Britishness is intrinsically tied with power relations and politics; in terms of nationhood and belonging, expressing or recognising one's Britishness provokes a range of responses and attitudes, such as advocacy, indifference or rejection. Macphee and Poddar state that although the designation of the two differing terms, Britishness and Englishness, is not simple as they are invariably conflated, they are both tied into the identity of the British Empire and nation, since these last two are altering considerably as Englishness and Britishness do too. Thus the slippage between the two words can be seen as a play between these changing dynamics.

Britishness "sprung into political and academic prominence" in the late 20th century, but its origins lie with the formation of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707. Although Britishness was used to refer to Britons collectively as early as 1682, historian Linda Colley asserts that it was after the Acts of Union 1707 that the citizens of Great Britain began to assume a "layered" identity — to think of themselves as simultaneously British but also Scottish, English, and/or Welsh. In this formative period, Britishness was "closely bound up with Protestantism". The Oxford English Dictionary Online dates the first known use of the term Britishness to refer to the state of being British to a June 1857 issue of Putnam's Monthly Magazine.

Since the late 20th century, the exploration and proliferation of Britishness became directly associated with a desire to define, sustain or restore a homogeneous British identity or allegiance to Britain, prompting debate. For instance, the Life in the United Kingdom test — reported as a test of one's Britishness — has been described as controversial. The UK Independence Party have asserted that Britishness is tied with inclusive civic nationalism, whereas the Commission for Racial Equality reported that, Scots, Welsh, Irish and ethnic minorities may feel quite divorced from Britishness because of white English dominance; Gwynfor Evans, Welsh nationalist politician, said that "Britishness is a political synonym for Englishness which extends English culture over the Scots, Welsh and the Irish". With regards to a proposed oath of allegiance for school leavers, historian David Starkey argued that it is impossible to teach Britishness because "a British nation doesn't exist."

**Ethnicity and social trends**

Although England is no longer an independent nation state, but rather a constituent country within the United Kingdom, the English may still be regarded as a "nation" according to the Oxford English Dictionary's definition: a group united by factors that include "language, culture, history, or occupation of the same territory".

The concept of an "English nation" is far older than that of the "British nation", and the 1990s witnessed a revival in English self-consciousness. This is linked to the expressions of national self-awareness of the other British nations of Wales and Scotland – which take their most solid form in the new devolved political arrangements within the United Kingdom – and the waning of a shared British national identity with the growing distance between the end of the British Empire and the present.

Many recent immigrants to England have assumed a solely British identity, while others have developed dual or hyphenated identities. Use of the word "English" to describe Britons from ethnic minorities in England is complicated by most non-white people in England identifying as British rather than English. In their 2004 Annual Population Survey, the Office for National Statistics compared the ethnic identities of British people with their perceived national identity. They found that while 58% of white people described their nationality as "English", the vast majority of non-white people called themselves "British".

Not all people residing in England and the United Kingdom are white due to recent immigration from foreign countries, according to the 2011 census in England, around 85.4% of residents are white (British, Irish, other European), 7.8% Asian (mainly South Asian), 3.5% Black, 2.3% are of Mixed-race heritage, 0.4% Arab, and 0.6% identified as Other ethnicity. With a significantly higher ethnic minority population in large cities such as London.

A survey conducted in 2007 found that the majority of people in many non-white ethnic groups living in Great Britain described their national identity as British. This included almost nine in ten (87%) of people with mixed heritage, 85% of Black Caribbean people, and 80% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Non-whites were more likely to describe themselves as British than whites. One-third of people from the White British group described themselves as British; the remaining two third of respondents identified themselves as English, Welsh, or Scottish.

A study conducted for the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) in 2005 found that, in England, the majority of ethnic minority participants identified primarily as British, whereas white English participants identified as English first and British second. In Wales and Scotland, the majority of both white and ethnic minority participants identified as Welsh or Scottish first and British second, although they saw no incompatibility between the two identities. Other research conducted for the CRE found that white participants felt that there was a threat to Britishness from large-scale immigration, the 'unfair' claims that they perceived ethnic minorities made on the welfare state, a rise in moral pluralism and political correctness. Much of this frustration was found to be targeted at Muslims rather than minorities in general. Muslim participants in the study reported feeling victimised and stated that they felt that they were being asked to choose between Muslim and British identities, whereas they saw it possible to be both at the same time.

**Within the United Kingdom**

***English national identity***

A national identity of the English as the people or ethnic group native to England developed in the Middle Ages arguably beginning with the unification of the Kingdom of England in the 10th century, but explicitly in the 11th century after the Norman Conquest, when Englishry came to be the status of the subject indigenous population.

From the eighteenth century the terms 'English' and 'British' began to be seen as interchangeable to many of the English.

While the official UK census does record ethnicity, English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British is a single tick-box under the "White" heading for the answer to the ethnicity question asked in England and Wales (while making the distinction of White Irish).

Although Englishness and Britishness are used synonymously in some contexts, the two terms are not identical and their relation to each other is complex. Englishness is often a response to different national identities within Britain such as Scottishness, Irishness, Welshness.

Sometimes Englishness is thought to be encapsulated in terms of a particular relation to sport: "fair play," for instance. Arguably, England's "national games" are football and, particularly, cricket. As cricket historian Dominic Malcolm argues, the link between cricket and England's national identity became solidified through literature. Works such as James Love's "Cricket: an heroic poem" and Mary Mitford's "our Village," along with Nyren's "cricketers of my Time" and Pycroft's "The Cricket Field," purported to identity the characteristics of cricket with the notional characteristics of English society, such as pragmatism, integrity, and independence.

***Scotland***



There is evidence that people in Scotland are increasingly likely to describe themselves as Scottish, and less likely to say they are British. A 2006 study by social scientists at the Universities of Edinburgh, Dundee, St Andrews and Lancaster shows that more than eight out of ten people in Scotland saw themselves as Scottish. At the same time, there has been a long-term decline in Scots defining themselves as British, although more than half of the people in the survey saw themselves as British.

In the 2011 Census in Scotland:

62% identified themselves as Scottish only

18% identified themselves as Scottish and British

8% identified themselves as British only

The Scottish National Party MSP and Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill gave the following submission to the UK Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights in March 2008 discussing a British Bill of Rights:

What is meant by Britishness? Is there a concept of Britishness? Yes, just as there is a concept of being Scandinavian. We eat fish and chips, we eat chicken masala, we watch EastEnders. Are we British? No, we are not. We consider ourselves Scottish.